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Mr D Edwards
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Dear Mr Edwards

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 December to look at work in PSHE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of PSHE, the visit had a particular focus on:

- how the PSHE curriculum meets the specific needs of pupils in your local area, and how progress is tracked and assessed; and
- the contribution made by PSHE to the future economic well-being of your pupils.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with you, the head of the personal development curriculum, inclusion co-ordinator, pastoral co-ordinator and head of Year 7, the co-ordinator of the school council, groups of Year 9 pupils, chef, school's sport co-ordinator and school council, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of three lessons, and a house assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be good.

Achievement in PSHE

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Pupils understand the need for a balanced diet and regular exercise in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of the different forms of bullying and how these can be resisted. They understand about the changes that occur whilst growing up.
- Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good. They enjoy their work and have positive attitudes towards the subject. They are articulate and self-assured and have very well-developed presentation skills. This was demonstrated in the excellent assembly which they presented.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching seen was satisfactory.

- Teachers have good relationships with their classes, maintain good discipline and plan lessons carefully.
- However, teachers have not yet developed the skills to fully engage pupils in dialogue and explore their views on sensitive issues such as drug education.
- Assessment is good and includes self-assessment, but it could be further developed through the use of tasks to assess levels of knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils say they are very well supported through the mentoring system. They feel safe and secure and have a range of adults to whom they can turn if they have a problem.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum for PSHE is good.

- The curriculum has improved greatly since the previous subject visit. Pupils now have discrete PSHE lessons as well as provision across the curriculum, in mentor groups and in assembly.
- The school has gained the Healthy School Award and this has had a positive impact on healthy eating, and the PSHE curriculum.
- A range of extra-curricular activities, residential trips and sports clubs add greatly to the provision of PSHE, by providing opportunities for pupils to interact socially with each other and with adults, and keep fit.
- The curriculum covers careers education and guidance well, but there are some gaps and too little emphasis is placed on mental well-being and knowledge of the British political system.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are good.

- Good progress has been made since the previous inspection of this subject.
- The senior leadership of the school is well aware of the important contribution PSHE can make to personal development. The system of PSHE being taught by tutors has been dismantled and the school is in the process of building a specialist team of teachers for PSHE.
- The PSHE co-ordinator is competent and well-trained. She has mapped provision across the curriculum and put in place appropriate schemes of work.
- Monitoring and evaluation takes place but is not sharp enough to bring about improvement in the consistency of teaching and learning.

Subject issue: how well are pupils prepared for future economic well-being?

This aspect is satisfactory.

- There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility across the school.
- Pupils feel well supported for their move to the upper school.
- Careers education is effective with use of the "Real Game", careers library and interviews with the Connexions adviser.
- Not enough work takes place on managing personal finances or on enterprise education.

Inclusion

There is evidence of outstanding practice.

- The Inclusion Unit provides a range of short courses individually tailored to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. These include alcohol awareness, sex and relationships education and self-esteem.
- All pupils were included in lessons by skilful questioning techniques and teachers matching work to ability levels or particular needs.
- Pupils are made aware, through their PSHE and other lessons, of the ethnic diversity in modern Britain.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing teachers' specialist knowledge so they feel confident in allowing pupils to explore challenging issues
- improving provision for the management of personal finance and enterprise education.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your Local Authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector